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Archbishop Elpidophoros Christmas Message 2023



Prot. No. 350/2023

Archepiscopal Encyclical on the Feast of Christmas
December 25, 2023

Unto the Most Reverend and Right Reverend Hierarchs, Pious Priests and Deacons, Monks and Nuns, Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils, Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Members of Leadership 100, Day and Afternoon Schools, Philoptochos Societies, Youth, Greek Orthodox Organizations, and entirety of the Christ-loving Plenitude of the Sacred Archdiocese of America:

Thus says the Lord: a rod shall come forth out of the root of Jesse,
and a blossom shall rise from that root.

(Prophecy of Isaiah 11:1)

Beloved sisters and brothers in Christ,
Christ is Born! Let us glorify Him!

Although He comes to us in humility, in swaddling clothes and in poverty, He is the powerful Rod of the Root of Jesse. In assuming our human nature from his Most

Holy Mother the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, He bears all the suffering and sin of humanity across all the ages. What strength in this Rod! What glory in His powerful love for every creature!

He also comes as a blossom of inner and truthful beauty, to restore our human nature to its original shining loveliness. The Prophet Isaiah says elsewhere, "He had no beauty nor glory..." (53:2), but such was the humility that bowed down the Son of God to become the Son of Man. The flower of His virtues, His sinless life, His sacrificial love, is a bloom that will never fade. The root of His human nature is his Holy Mother, who bore him in a cave in Bethlehem of Judea. But from this root out of dry and virginal ground, there arose the first fruits of them that slept (I Corinthians 15:20)! For the Lord was born in cave in order to arise from another cave. He was wrapped as an infant in swaddling clothes in order to proclaim His own Resurrection by leaving behind the grave-linens set aside in the tomb (John 20:5). And He was laid in a manger — used to feed the mute beasts of burden — so that we might be fed with His Holy Body and Precious Blood and proclaim Him risen from the dead.

Therefore, my beloved Christians, let us receive this Rod of glory and Blossom of beauty with gratitude and honor. Through his Holy Mother, His human nature is our human nature, and there is nothing that He cannot make whole and pure. Let us worship Him with all our hearts, and minds, and souls.

Christ is Born! Let us glorify Him!

† ELPIDOPHOROS

Archbishop of America

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